



# INDUSTRY CIRCULAR

DEPARTMENT OF  
THE TREASURY

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms  
Washington, D.C. 20226

Number: 83-11

Date: October 26, 1983

WARNING

WARNING

WARNING

POTENTIAL EXPLOSION HAZARD IN AUTOMATIC AMMUNITION RELOADING  
MACHINES

To Firearms and Explosives Licensees, Law Enforcement  
Agencies, and Others Concerned:

PURPOSE: This circular has been published to inform  
you of a potential explosion hazard relating to a malfunctioning  
of automatic ammunition reloading equipment.

In 1982, ATF assisted in the investigation of an  
explosion at a commercial reloading plant which resulted in  
the death of 2 individuals and injuries to 10 others.  
Investigation of this industrial accident revealed that the  
explosion was initiated by the ignition of a primer during  
its seating in a cartridge primer pocket. This ignition  
source from a nonaligned primer started a chain reaction  
resulting in an explosion of the machine's smokeless powder  
feeder canister.

The manufacturing process of many automatic reloading  
machines includes both a bulk powder feeder and a primer  
seating operation in close proximity to one another.  
Interviews with reloaders reveal that small explosions of  
nonaligned primers are fairly common in occurrence. The  
incident of the exploding bulk powder canister is an  
uncommon situation but it is not without precedent; other  
similar explosive incidents have been noted in the past  
several years.

The Explosives Control Act of 1970 in part provides  
that ... "The Secretary (Department of Treasury) is  
authorized to inspect the sites of explosions or fires, in  
which there is reason to believe that explosive materials  
were involved, in order that if any such incident has been  
brought about by accidental means, precautions may be taken  
to prevent similar accidents from occurring."

It has now become apparent that the close proximity of the primer seating operation to the bulk powder canister could be responsible for some of these incidents. In the interest of public safety, ATF therefore suggests that you review housekeeping and safety procedures relative to your automatic reloading production process and utilize every precaution to prevent other similar incidents from occurring.

INQUIRIES: Inquiries concerning this circular should refer to its number and be addressed to the Assistant Director (Criminal Enforcement), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20226 (ATTN: Chief, Explosives Division).

*Stephen E. Higgins*  
Director

GPO 902-932

Department of the Treasury  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms  
Washington, D.C. 20226

Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Postage and Fees Paid  
Department of the Treasury  
Treas 564

